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Andrews vows aid for S.J. projects

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GLASSBORO

Homeland security funding and Gloucester County's distressed levee system along the Delaware River are at the top of his to-do list, said U.S. Rep. Rob Andrews, D-Haddon Heights, after a 90-minute meeting Friday with area elected officials.

Local leaders said they worry the funding formula for homeland security grants favors more populous communities.

Andrews told those at a forum at Rowan University that he will work to create separate funding pools for towns with meritorious applications that were denied in the past. He also noted the federal Department of Homeland Security will distribute an estimated \$600 million based primarily on risk rather than population.

Andrews said the change could mean an extra \$30 million to \$40 million for New Jersey.

He was less certain about how much Gloucester County could expect to receive for levee restoration in this year's federal budget. Mayors George Shivery of Greenwich and Frank Minor of Logan were there to argue for federal funding.

The 4 1/2-mile levee, which has six floodgates, is in serious disrepair. Local officials and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers experts have said that if the levees were to fail, hundreds of properties would be immediately affected, as well as nearby rail lines, Interstate 295, petrochemical plants such as DuPont and Valero Energy, and a Superfund site on the Hercules Inc. property in Greenwich.

Andrews also predicted that if a project to deepen the Delaware River's shipping channel by 5 feet ever begins, all the dredge debris will ultimately be dumped in South Jersey.

Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell, who vigorously supports the dredging, can say all he wants about transporting river bottom muck to fill his state's coal mines, but such a proposal is cost-prohibitive, Andrews said.

He then reiterated his pledge to keep dredge spoils off South Jersey's river shores, which he believes are much better suited to business and recreation.

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